EL'S
MIXTAPE
CHRONICLES
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El's Mixtape Chronicles by Brown Eyes Parker

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Summary: All she can think about is Mike while she lies in bed listening to her Mazzy Star tape when she is supposed to be asleep. She doesn't know when she developed a crush on him. OR songs that make El think of Mike. AU. Set in the 90s.

El's Mixtape Chronicles

Author's Note I:
This was a Secret Santa gift I wrote in 2018. I never got around to posting it here, I'm quite proud of it though. SO, here we are. Also, note, just because El has an AU playlist doesn't mean that I won't write one in canon. . . and in the 80s. ANYWAYS. Without further ado.

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All she can think about is Mike while she lies in bed listening to her *Mazzy Star* tape when she is supposed to be asleep. She doesn't know when she developed a crush on him. But somewhere between frog dissections and endless conversations about the universe, her heart has started to skip a beat whenever he's around.

But his head is always in the stars, he sees the Milky Way and uncharted planets. She flips over on her back and focuses on the glow-in-the-dark constellations on her ceiling. She makes wishes that maybe one day, he'll notice her as more than a friend and his lab partner.

She drifts off on a sea of daydreams and with *fade into you, strange you never knew* playing over and over again in her mind.

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Annie Lennox is playing at the school dance, El's spaghetti strap falls down and she yanks it back up over her shoulder. Her heart is beating anxiously as she watches Mike eat Cheese Nips and chat with Will, his best friend and her step-brother. All she wants to do is ask him to dance with her but she doesn't want to hear him say no.

But she finds herself walking towards him anyways because even though there's a possibility he'll say no, he could still say *yes*. She'll never find out if she doesn't ask, and she thinks a no will be better than not knowing.

Before she knows it, she's standing in front of him. She clears her

throat, tugs at a strand of short hair, and her words catch in her throat.

"I think my sister has something to ask you," Will says, barely able to conceal his smile.

"*Me?"* Mike looks incredulous. "What makes you think she wants to talk to me?"

"Trust me. She wants to talk to *you*," Will assures him. "I'm going to get some punch. Good luck El."

Mike looks at his feet. "Hey El," he mumbles. "What can I do for you tonight?"

"I, um, I was just wondering what you got for number 15 on our biology exam," El answers, wincing inwardly at just how awkward she really is.

"Number 15? There wasn't a number 15. Did I miss something?"

El shakes her head. "No. I just made that up because I had to come up with some excuse to come and ask you—"

Mike finally looks at her. "Ask me what?"

"If you. . . ifyouwantedtodancewithme," El says it all at once before she loses all her resolve.

"Could you say that a little slower, please? I want to make sure I heard you right."

El takes a deep breath to calm herself down. "I was wondering if you wanted to dance with me."

"I have two left feet," Mike confesses. "I can work my way around a scalpel but I'm afraid I'll be terrible on the dance floor."

"I'm willing to take that chance," El answers, wishing and hoping with everything in her that he'll say yes.

Mike takes her hand, startling her. "Okay," he agrees. "I'll dance with

you."

They stand at the edge of the basketball court as *When All the Stars Were Falling* starts to play. Mike puts both his hands on her waist and steals El's breath away. She hooks her arms around his neck and together they sway to the music. Their eyes meet in the middle of the bridge and it's all she can do not to kiss him.

He looks away quickly. . . shyly and El feels embarrassed for even entertaining thoughts about kissing him. She doesn't even know how, even though she's spent endless afternoons watching soap operas and perusing *Seventeen* magazine and *Cosmo*.

The song ends and Mike releases her, backing up and putting some distance between them.

She pauses. "Thank you," she finally says.

Mike smiles at her warmly. *"Thank you!"* He replies, shuffling his feet. "I don't know why you asked me to dance."

She almost tells him but not one episode of *Beverly Hills, 90210* or *Boy Meets World* has prepared her for this situation. So, she shrugs and doesn't say *"I like you"*.

The moment ends when Max runs up to her babbling about Lucas and how he is an absolute *douche*. She looks at Mike and apologizes before she goes off to help her friend with her latest boy troubles.

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She's dancing around the living room barefoot and in frayed Calvin Klein jeans while she vacuums. She pauses for a second to pull her curls away from her face and then adjusts her yellow headphones.

"*I'm a bitch, I'm a lover!"* She sings. *"I'm a child, I'm a mother. I'm a sinner, I'm a saint. I do not feel ashamed. I'm your hell, I'm your dream. I'm nothing in between, you know you wouldn't want it any other way—"* she stops short when she realizes Mike is watching her, a can of Coke in hand, a small smile on his face. She blushes and turns the vacuum off. "What are you doing here?"

"I was supposed to start my robot with Will this afternoon but he's not here right now. So, Joyce told me to make myself at home," Mike explains. "What were *you* doing?"

El pulls her striped t-shirt down over her belly. "Trying to get my chores done before I started my homework. So. . . you saw that?"

"I didn't think you were the kind of girl who listened to that kind of music."

El presses the pause button on her Walkman and smiles. "You think about what kind of girl I am?"

Mike blushes. "What!? *No!*" he scoffs. "What are you even talking about *Jane*?"

"Wait a second do you. . . *like* me?" El teases, her stomach flip-flops, hoping she's actually close to the truth.

"*What!?"* Mike looks like he's about to combust. "Like *you*? Oh look! There's Will. Gotta go!"

El sighs and shakes her head. She presses play again and continues on doing her chores.

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They were all at a Christmas party and their host decides it would be a good idea to play spin the bottle. El thinks it's ridiculous but she doesn't say this aloud as she sits down in the circle. Mike's across from her looking nervous, his face reflects the way she feels on the inside.

She sits cross-legged, trying to be modest in her burgundy velour dress. She tugs on her plastic choker and watches as all her friends spin the empty milk bottle and then kiss the person it lands on. Finally, Jennifer Hayes proclaims it's time for El to take a turn.

El prays it lands on Will and nobody will make her take a do-over. She can kiss him on the cheek and be done with it. But the odds are not in her favor and it lands on Mike. She almost chokes on the piece of ice she's been working on.

"No do-overs!" Jennifer's friend says, smirking. "What are you afraid he's going to turn you into a frog or something?" she asks when she notices El's hesitation.

"No!" El proclaims, spitting her ice into her red Solo cup.

"Well, what are you waiting for? You're wasting time!"

The world around El seems to fade, all she can hear is her heart beating in her ears and *Last Christmas* playing in the background. This is her first kiss, this is her first kiss and once she does it, she won't be able to take it back. Or get a second chance to do it over again. She shakes her head, she's wanted her first kiss to be with Mike for as long as she can remember.

Maybe she should just stop overthinking it and take the opportunity to—

She doesn't have any more time to contemplate about what she's going to do. Mike has pressed his lips against hers and is kissing her almost impatiently. She loses all coherent thought for 5 seconds and then it was over just as quickly as it had started.

Mike stands up and leaves the circle, El follows him as quickly as her Doc Martins will allow. When they're in the kitchen, he whirls around to look at her.

"You were embarrassed to kiss me, weren't you?" he pours Coke into a fresh cup and doesn't look at her. "The Princess and the Nerd. It's not the kind of thing fairy tales are made of."

El shakes her head. "No!" she says. "It's not like that *at all*, Mike!"

"Then what's it like?" he asks. "Wait a second. . do you *like* me?"

It's an echo of the question she asked him back in the fall, except there's not a single hint of teasing in his question.

"*Like* you?" she repeats.

"I'm not fooling around, El!" He tells her. "I want to know how you feel about me. Sometimes I think you do have a crush on me and

others, I have to tell myself that I'm deluded."

"You think just because you're a nerd somebody couldn't like you?" El starts to walk towards him. "Well, I have something to tell you. . . you don't know how adorable you are."

"I don't?"

El shook her head. "No, you don't. . . and the truth is, I *do* have a crush on you. I have for a while now." she takes his cup from his hand and then pushes an errant curl away from his forehead. "Do you think. . . I mean, is there a chance you could like me too?"

Mike nods slowly. "El, you don't know how much I like you. You have no idea just how *long* I've liked you."

"How long?" El asks breathlessly.

"Probably since first grade," Mike admits. "When you came to school with your head shaved because Sarah had lost all her hair after chemo—"

El stands on tiptoe and kisses him again.

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She studies him, studying a book on the stars. *The New Radicals* are playing on the jukebox, echoing what she's feeling for him. She *just can't get enough*. . . he looks up at her and smiles when he notices that she's staring.

She looks into her milkshake, slightly embarrassed that he caught her. Of course, she has nothing to be embarrassed about. They *are* dating, it's not like she's sitting across the diner watching him like some voyeuristic, pining creep.

"Hey," he says.

She blushes. "Hi."

"I guess I got caught up and forgot where I was," Mike apologizes as he closes the book and pushes it to the center of the table. "I'm sorry."

She shakes her head, finding her voice. "No, it's okay! It's one of the things I lo. . . it's one of the things I really, *really* like about you."

"How I'm so absent-minded, I forgot my girlfriend was sitting across the table from me?" Mike asks as he takes her hands.

"I like how your head always seems to be in the stars," El tells him. "I've always found it adorable."

"You know, most other girls would find it annoying. They would say stuff like *"why aren't you paying attention to me?"*. Trust me, I've heard enough from Nancy to know what constitutes as normal teenage female behavior."

"Don't you know, I'm not like other girls."

"You're not like other girls where it counts," Mike admits. "But I believe you did make me watch Roswell with you the other night. That's normal teenage girl behavior."

El frees one of her hands long enough to chuck one of her French fries at his nose. He moves away so it just misses him and they laugh together.

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It's her birthday and Mike spends the day ignoring her. El is getting increasingly frustrated, because he's never exhibited signs of what they've dubbed 'normal teen behavior'. He brings her Pop Rocks and Coke on the monthly anniversary of the day they got together. He's even gotten her Midol on the days she needs it. So, she doesn't understand why he's not attentive on one of the days it counts.

"Maybe he's planning an epic sort of surprise," Max says as she pops a wad of Bubblicious and skates circles around El. "He *would* do that sort of thing."

"Do you know something?" El asks suspiciously.

Max snaps another bubble. "Nah. Wheeler wouldn't tell *me* anything. He'd be too afraid I'd run and tell you about it."

"Lucas hasn't mentioned anything either?"

"*Lucas?"* Max scoffs. "We're currently off again. I'm lucky if he says hello to me, never mind telling me about some crap your boyfriend's trying to pull off."

"You really think he's going to do something special?"

Max attempts to do a trick with her skateboard. "Mike Wheeler is the epitome of a cheeseball and you only turn sweet 16 *once*. Of course he's going to do something special! Don't worry about it too much. Okay?"

"I named a star after you," Mike tells her later that night as they lay on a blanket in her backyard, the radio station is playing *Crash Into Me*. "For your birthday."

She turns her head to look at him. "You named a star after me?"

"Yeah," Mike answers. "I can even show you where it is. I know it's not a big deal but that's why I didn't talk to you all day. I wanted to wait until the perfect moment to tell you and you know how I feel about the stars."

"Yeah. . ." El echoes.

"I like them almost as much as I like you."

"It's nice to know I've moved up on your list," El teases.

Mike blushes. "You've always been number 1 on my list," he tells her.

She kisses him, she doesn't know how he does it but he always knows the right thing to say. "Show me my star," she whispers.

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The first time she says she loves him, they're having an argument. She doesn't remember what it's about, but it's hot out and she's standing in the middle of her street in a two-piece bathing suit and cut-offs. Maybe they're fighting because of the heatwave. Weather makes people do strange things.

The kids across the street are running through the sprinklers while their mom listens to *The Cranberries*.

As soon as the words tumble out of her mouth, Mike stops mid-sentence and stares at her.

"What did you just say?" he asks.

"I *love* you," she answers, rolling her eyes. "Even though you're an idiot."

Mike looks even more confused. "Wait. Why am I an idiot exactly?"

"Because you haven't said you love *me*!" El replies boldly.

Mike blushes and looks around the neighborhood awkwardly. "I love you too," he finally says after a beat. "You have to know I love you too without me even saying it."

El smiles, their fight is suddenly forgotten. "I know but it's nice to hear you finally say it aloud. Come on, let's chase down the ice cream truck and you can buy me a lemonade popsicle."

Mike hurries to catch up with her and takes her hand.

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She puts all the songs that remind her of him on a mixtape and gives it to him for his birthday.

The End

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Author's Note:

Thank you so much for giving me leeway to write whatever I wanted. I had a blast writing this and living so shamelessly in the 90s for a while. I hope you enjoyed this, and THANK YOU for your patience while I combated a wedding and sickness on my journey to finish it.

Please drop a review if you liked this.

Love,
Holly